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Virgil. Aeneid

Vergil's Aeneid,II

A translation by  
A.A.Irwin Nesbitt, M.A.

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VERGIL'S

# ÆNEID, II.

*A TRANSLATION*

BY

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ALL were hushed and kept their faces in fixed attention towards him. Then thus father Æneas began from his lofty couch :

Cruel to be told, O queen, is the grief thou biddest me renew, how the Danaï overthrew the Trojan might and woeful empire, and the sad events of which I myself was a witness, in which I had no small share. Who of the Myrmidones or the Dolopes, what soldier of the stern Ulysses, could restrain his tears as I told such a tale? And already dark night is hurrying down the sky, and the setting stars invite to sleep. But if thou hast so great a longing to learn our calamities, and to hear briefly told the dying struggle of Troy, though my heart shudders and shrinks with grief from recalling those things to mind, yet will I attempt it.

13. Worn out by war and baffled by the Fates now that the passing years were so many, the leaders of the Greeks, with craft inspired by the Goddess Pallas, construct a horse mountain-high, and frame his sides of planks of pine : they pretend that it is a votive offering to secure their safe return ; such is the rumour that is spread abroad. In this, in the dark recesses of its side, they secretly enclose the picked men of their host, when they have selected them by lot, and fill the huge

hollows of its womb to their inmost depths with armed soldiery.

21. In full view of Troy lies Tenedos, an island well known to fame, rich in all manner of wealth while the kingdom of Priam stood, now a bay merely and a treacherous roadstead for ships. To this island they put out and hide on its desert shores. We thought that they had departed and made for Mycenæ, availing themselves of the wind. Then all Teucria casts off the grief that had endured so long. The gates are flung wide open : pleasant is it to go forth and see the Doric camp and the places they have left and the deserted shore. Here was encamped the band of the Dolopes ; here the fierce Achilles pitched his tent ; here was the fleet drawn up ; here they were wont to engage us. Some gaze in amazement at the baneful offering to the virgin Goddess Minerva, and wonder at the vast size of the horse ; and Thymœtes first strongly urges that it be brought within the walls and lodged in the citadel, mayhap through treachery, haply because the fates of Troy were now at last tending this way. But Capys, and those whose judgment was clearer, exhort us either to cast headlong into the sea this snare of the Danai, this mistrusted offering, to set fire to it and consume it, or to pierce and explore the lurking-places in the hollow of the womb. The wavering crowd is divided between two opinions.

40. First then before them all, a great crowd accompanying him, Laocoon rushes down in wild excitement from the summit of the citadel, and from afar he cries : ' What terrible madness is this, my hapless countrymen ? Do you believe that the foe has really sailed away ? Or think ye that any gifts of the Danai are guileless ? Is this your experience of Ulysses ? Either in this wooden frame Achæans are shut up and concealed, or this engine has been fashioned to assail our walls, to look down upon our homes, and to overtop our city, or some other wile is hidden in it ; trust not the horse, ye Trojans ! Whatever this is, I fear the Danai even when they bring gifts.' Thus speaking he hurled with mighty strength his huge spear against the side and into the curving frame-work



of the belly of the monster. There it stood quivering, and from the stricken womb the hollows echoed to their depths, and sent forth a groaning sound. And had the Fates so willed it, had our minds not been perverted, then had he moved us to destroy with our weapons the Argive ambush, and thou, O Troy, wouldst now be standing, and thou, O lofty citadel of Priam, wouldst still remain.

57. Lo! at this moment some Dardan shepherds were haling with loud shouts into the presence of the king a youth with his hands bound behind his back, who, being unknown, had voluntarily put himself in the way of chance-comers that he might compass this very thing, and open Troy to the Achæans, confident of soul, and prepared for either fortune, either to carry through his crafty purpose, or to meet certain death. The Trojan warriors, eager to see him, rush from all sides and surround him, and vie with each other in mocking the captive. Now hear of the wiles of the Danaï, and from this one foul deed learn what they all are. For when he stood the observed of all, confused, unarmed, and gazed around him on the thronging Phrygians: 'Alas!' he cries, 'what land, what seas may now receive me? or what is now in store for me, wretch that I am, who can find no place anywhere among the Danaï, while the Dardans also are wroth with me, and demand that I should pay the penalty with my life?' And by this pitiful cry our hearts were turned, and all our fury was stayed. We exhort him to speak, to tell us from what race he is sprung, or what news he brings us, or in what, captive that he is, he puts his trust. [At length, laying aside his fears, he speaks thus:]

77. 'All things will I confess to thee truly, O king, hap what may,' he says, 'and I will not deny that I am of Argive birth—this first I tell thee; and though Fortune hath brought misery on Sinon, the shameless Goddess shall not make him a babbler and a liar also. If perchance in talking the name of Palamedes, the descendant of Belus, and his glorious fame have reached thy ears—whom, innocent though he was, in consequence of a

false charge brought against him because he opposed the war, the Pelasgi by cruel sentence condemned to death, but now bewail him when he has been deprived of life—as his companion, then, being as I was his near kinsman, my needy father sent me hither to the war while yet a boy. While he remained in full possession of his royal dignity, and was a power in the councils of the kings, I, too, had a name and good repute. But when, through the malice of the crafty Ulysses—I tell thee of things thou knowest—he left the upper world, dashed from my high estate, I passed my life in gloom and sorrow, and in my heart was wrath for the sad fate of my innocent friend. And in my madness I could not hold my peace, and I swore that, should chance bring it about, should I ever return victorious to my native Argos, I would avenge him, and by such words I roused bitter enmity against myself. From this time commenced my downfall; from this time forth Ulysses was ever frightening me by fresh accusations; from this time forth he spread through the host doubtful rumours, and, knowing my intentions, sought weapons against me. And in good sooth he rested not, until, using Calchas as his tool—But why do I thus idly tell a tale which cannot please you? or why stay you if you hold all Greeks alike, and it is sufficient for you to know that I am one? Exact the penalty so long deferred; this the Ithacan would wish, and the sons of Atreus would pay high for it.'

105. Then, indeed, do we eagerly ask about and seek to learn how his fall was wrought, having no experience of such baseness or Pelasgian cunning. He continues trembling, and speaks with feigned emotion: 'Often did the Danaï desire to leave Troy and commence their retreat and to depart, for they were weary of the long war. Would that they had done so! Often did the fierce and stormy sea prevent them, and gales terrify them when about to start. But chiefly when this horse stood complete, framed of maple-beams, the storm-clouds thundered from the whole of heaven. In anxious doubt we send Eurypylus to question the oracles of Phœbus, and he brings back this gloomy message from the shrine:

“With blood and with the sacrifice of a virgin did ye appease the winds, ye Danaï, when first ye sailed for the shores of Ilium; with blood must ye purchase your return, and atonement must be made with an Argive life.” When this utterance reached the ears of the host, their minds were horror-stricken, and a chill shudder ran through their very bones, as they wonder for whom the Fates decree this death—whom Apollo claims. Then the Ithacan with loud shouts drags the seer Calchas into the midst of the people, and demands what these divine mandates may mean. And already many foretold the cruel wrong that the wily prince would do me, and silent saw that which was about to happen. For twice five days he will not speak, and, veiling his face, refuses by his words to hand over or deliver anyone up to death. At last, reluctantly urged by the loud clamouring of Ulysses, he speaks as it was agreed that he should speak, and dooms me to the altar. All were consenting to my death, and what each feared for himself they bore when it meant but the destruction of one poor wretch. And now the cruel day had come; the sacred rites were being prepared for me, and the salt meal and the fillets on my temples. I fled from death, I confess it, and burst my bonds, and through that night I lay hidden, concealed in the sedge in a marshy lake, till they should set sail, if haply they might have sailed. And now I have no hope of seeing my dear old country, nor my darling children, nor the father I yearn to see. Haply my foes will even require them to suffer for my escape, and by the deaths of these unhappy ones will seek to expiate this guilt of mine. Wherefore by the powers above us, and the deities who know the truth, by all the inviolate good faith which still remains anywhere among mortals, pity, I entreat thee, my terrible troubles, pity the heart that suffers undeservedly.’

145. To his tears we grant his life; ay, and we pity him. Priam himself first orders that the manacles and close-drawn bonds be removed, and thus addresses him with friendly words: ‘Whoever thou art, from henceforth now forget the Greeks, and cast them off—thou shalt be

one of us—and answer truly this my question, For what purpose have they set up this huge horse? who suggested it? or what object have they in view? What religious purpose is it meant to serve? or what manner of war-like engine is it?’ He ceased; but the other, skilled in treachery and Pelasgian cunning, raised to heaven his hands, now released from their bonds. ‘I call you to witness, eternal fires, and your divine power that knows not violation,’ he cries, ‘and you altars and cruel swords which I have escaped, and the chaplets of the Gods which I wore as a victim: it is lawful for me to shake off my sacred obligations to the Greeks, it is lawful for me to hate those men, and to bring into the light of day whatever they anywhere conceal; nor am I restrained \* by any laws of my country. Only do thou remain true to thy promise, and keep faith with me when I have saved Troy, if I speak the truth, if I make thee ample return.

162. ‘All the hope of the Danai, and their trust in the successful issue of the war they had begun, ever rested on the aid of Pallas. However, from the time when the godless son of Tydeus and Ulysses, skilled in devising wicked deeds, having undertaken to tear the fateful Palladium from the sacred temple, slew the guards on the summit of the citadel, and carried off the holy image, and dared with bloodstained hands to touch the fillets of the virgin Goddess: from that time the hopes of the Greeks began to ebb, and slowly drifted back; their strength was broken; the heart of the Goddess was turned from them. And by no doubtful portents did Tritonia signify that this was so. Scarce had the image been lodged in the camp when sparkling flames blazed from its kindling eyes, and salt sweat burst out over its limbs, and then, strange to tell, it sprang untouched from the earth, with its shield and quivering lance. Straightway Calchas warns them that they must retreat over the sea, and that Pergamus may not be destroyed by Argive weapons, if they do not again take omens at Argos, and bring back that favour of heaven which they had brought away over the sea and in their curved ships. And now,

as for their having sailed with favouring breezes for Mycenæ, they are providing a new armament, and winning Gods to aid them, and they will appear here unexpectedly when they have crossed the sea again. Thus Calchas explains the omens. Warned by him, they have set up this image in the stead of the Palladium, to make atonement for the injured Godhead, to be an expiation for that dark and impious deed. But Calchas ordered them to raise this mighty mass with close-joined oaken timbers, and to build it high as heaven, that it might not be received through the gates, or drawn within your walls, or guard the people under the shelter of the old belief; for, said he, if hand of yours should have done violence to the gift of Minerva, then fell ruin—ere that may the Gods fulfil this prophecy on himself—would be in store for the empire of Priam and the Phrygians; but that if by your hands it should have ascended into your city, that Asia unassailed would assail the walls of Pelops with mighty war, and that this destiny would be in store for our descendants.’

Through this deceitful tale and the cunning of the perjured Sinon, what he said was believed, and by his wiles and forced tears we were taken; we, whom neither Tydeus’ son, nor Achilles of Larissa, nor ten years’ war, nor a thousand ships subdued.

199. And now another portent, greater and much more terrible, presents itself to us hapless ones, and troubles our minds, which could not foresee the fate in store for us. Laocoon, who by lot had been chosen priest to Neptune, was sacrificing a huge bull at the wonted altars. When lo! from Tenedos over the calm sea—I shudder as I tell the tale—two snakes, with huge coils, stretch themselves out upon the sea, and side by side make for the shore. Their breasts raised amidst the waters and their blood-stained crests overtop the waves; the rest of their bodies trails through the sea behind them, and bends in coils their huge backs; and a rushing sound is heard as the sea is lashed into foam. And now they reached the field, their fierce eyes bloodshot and fiery; with quivering tongues they licked their hissing mouths. Pale with fear, we



flee in all directions at the sight. They, unswerving, make for Laocoon, and first each serpent, throwing its coils around the small bodies of his two sons, wreathes round them and devours their wretched limbs with its bite. Then they seize himself as he hastens to his children's aid with his weapons in his hand, and bind him with their huge folds; and now they have twice coiled themselves round his middle, twice have their scaly backs twined round his neck, and they raise high above him their heads and lofty necks. He the while strives with his hands to tear away their knots, his fillets smeared with slime and black poison, while he raises terrible cries to heaven. Such is the bellowing which a wounded bull makes when he has escaped from the altar, and shaken from his neck the ill-aimed axe. But the two snakes, gliding away, escape to the lofty shrine, seek the citadel of cruel Tritonis, and take shelter at the feet of the Goddess, under the circle of her shield. Then, indeed, a new terror steals through the quaking hearts of all, and they say that Laocoon has deservedly paid the penalty for his crime, in that with spear-point he harmed the sacred oak, and hurled his impious lance into the body of the image. All cry out that the image must be conducted to the temple, and that the divine favour of the Goddess must be prayed for. We breach the walls and throw open the defences of the city. All gird themselves to the task, and place smoothly moving wheels under the feet, and fasten hempen ropes to the neck. The fatal engine, big with war, scales our walls: around it boys and maidens sing sacred songs, and joy to touch the rope with their hands. It ascends, and, towering high, glides into the midst of the city. O my country! O Ilium, home of the Gods, and walls of the sons of Dardanus, famous in war! Four times on the very threshold of the gate it came to a stop, and four times from its womb came the clash of arms: still, heedless and blinded by our mad impulse, we press on, and place the ill-starred monster in the sacred citadel. Then, too, with warning of our doom Cassandra opens her lips, by the Gods' decree never believed by the Trojans. We poor wretches,

though this day was our last, wreath the shrines of the Gods with festal garlands throughout the city.

250. Meanwhile the sky turns and Night rushes up from the ocean, enveloping in her broad shadows earth and heaven and the wiles of the Myrmidones; and the Trojans stretched on the walls were silent, and sleep embraces their weary limbs. And now the Argive host was advancing from Tenedos with ships in regular order, through the friendly silence of the still moonlight, seeking the well-known shores, when suddenly the royal ship raised a signal fire, and Sinon, protected by the unkindly decree of the Gods, releases the Danai shut up in the hollow of the horse, and secretly unbars their pinewood prison. The horse is thrown open, and restores them to the air of heaven, and joyfully from the hollow fabric come forth first Thessandrus and Sthenelus and the terrible Ulysses, slipping down a rope which they lowered; then Acamas and Thoas, and Neoptolemus of Peleus' seed, preceded by Machaon and Menelaus, and Epeus, himself the framer of the deceitful image. They enter the city buried in sleep and wine; the guards are slain, the gates are opened, and they admit their friends and join the bands of their confederates.

268. It was the hour when rest first begins for wearied mortals, and by heaven's grace steals over them a most welcome visitor: when lo! in my dreams, before my very eyes methought that Hector appeared to stand near me in most mournful guise, and shed abundant tears; just such as he was in that former time when dragged behind Achilles' car, black with bloodstained dust, and with his swollen feet pierced with a thong! Ah me, what a sorry sight he was! how changed from that Hector who returned clad in the spoils of Achilles, or hurled the Phrygian brands on the ships of the Danai! Squalid was his beard, and his hair was matted with blood, and he showed all those many wounds which he received while being dragged round the walls of his native town. And methought that, weeping, I first addressed the hero, and uttered these sad words: 'O Light of Dardania! surest hope of the Trojans! what long delay has kept thee?

From what regions dost thou come, Hector, thou for whom we have looked so long? With what joy do we behold thee, wearied out as we are after so many of thy friends have been slain, after all the hardships of the people and the city? What cause has foully marred thy calm face? Why do I see these wounds?' No answer does he make, nor does he heed my vain questions, but uttering a deep groan from his very heart, 'Alas! fly,' he says, 'Goddess born, and save thyself from these flames. The enemy is in possession of the walls; Troy is falling from her lofty summit; enough hath been done for thy country and for Priam; could Pergama have been defended by the strong hand, even by this hand of mine would she have been defended. Troy commits to thy care her sacred things and her Penates; these take as companions of thy destiny, for these seek a city, the mighty one that thou shalt find when thy wanderings on the sea are at last over.' So he speaks, and with his own hands he brings forth from the inmost shrine the fillets and mighty Vesta and the fire that never dies.

298. Meanwhile the city is in wild confusion with widespread lamentation, and more and more clear grow the sounds, and the alarm of battle thickens, though the house of my father Anchises was retired, and stood back sheltered by trees. I start up from sleep, and scale the summit of the sloping roof, and stand with attentive ears; even as, when the south winds rage and the flames rush through a field of corn, or when a sweeping torrent pouring from the hills devastates the fields, lays waste the smiling harvest and the well-tilled champaign, and carries away the woods in its fierce rush, the shepherd hearing the sound from the lofty summit of some rock is filled with puzzled wonder. Then, in good sooth, is the truth manifest, and the wiles of the Danai are disclosed. Already the spacious mansion of Deiphobus has fallen into ruin, the Fire-god overwhelming it; already my neighbour Ucalegon is in flames; far and wide the Straits of Sigeum are lighted up by the conflagration, and the shouts of men arise and the blare of trumpets. Madly I seize my arms, and yet I have no definite pur-



pose in taking arms; but my soul is eager to collect a band for the fight, and to rush with my companions to the citadel; frenzy and rage make me reckless, and I feel that it would be glorious to die in arms.

318. But, behold, Pantheus escaped from the weapons of the Achæans, Pantheus, the son of Othrys, the priest of Phœbus in the citadel. In his hand he brings with him the holy things and the conquered Gods and his little grandson, and all distraught runs up to my threshold. 'How stand our fortunes, Pantheus? What citadel are we occupying?' Scarce had I thus spoken, when thus he answers with a groan: 'The last day of Dardania has come, and her inevitable hour. We Trojans are no more; no more are Ilium and the mighty fame of the Trojans. Cruel Jupiter has transferred all power to Argos. The Danaï are supreme in the city they have fired. The lofty horse stationed in the midst of our city pours forth armed men, and Sinon, exulting in his success, stirs up conflagrations. Some stand at the folding gates, as many thousands as ever came from great Mycenæ; others have beset with their weapons the narrow streets confronting all comers: the hedge of drawn swords with glittering blades stands there prepared to kill; scarcely do the first guards of the gate try to fight and oppose unseen perils.' At these words of the son of Othrys, and by the will of Heaven, I rush into the flames and the battle, whither the baleful Fury, whither the din calls me, and the shouts that rise to heaven. Rhipeus and Epytus, mighty in the fray, and Hypanis and Dymas, meeting me in the moonlight, join me and form a band at my side, and young Corcæbus, the son of Mygdon. In those days he had chanced to come to Troy, fired with a mad passion for Cassandra, and brought aid as his son-in-law to Priam and to the Phrygians—hapless youth in that he heeded not the warnings of his inspired betrothed! And when I saw all these banded together, and ready to dare the fray, I thus address them to increase their courage: 'Warriors, hearts in vain most brave, if it is your fixed desire to follow one making a last desperate effort, you see in what a state

affairs are: all the Gods have deserted their shrines and altars and left the city—the Gods by whom this empire stood. You are going to the aid of a city in flames; let us die, and rush into the thick of the fray; there is but one chance of safety for the vanquished—to expect no safety.’ By these words wild rage is added to the valour of the warriors. Then like plundering wolves in a black mist, whom the hunger that gnaws their entrails has driven blindly forth, while the cubs they have left behind await them with dry jaws, through the weapons, through the enemy we go to no uncertain death, and make our way towards the centre of the city; black night hovers around us with its hollow shade. Who could describe in words the horrors of that night, who the slaughter, or with his tears could keep measure with our woes? Totters to its fall an ancient city, which has ruled for many years, and in all directions, about the streets and the houses and the sacred thresholds of the Gods, are lying countless helpless bodies. But it is not the Trojans alone who pay the penalty of blood. Sometimes valour returns to the hearts of the vanquished also, and the victorious Danai fall. Everywhere is cruel mourning, everywhere is panic and death in many a shape.

370. First Androgeos meets us, a great crowd of Danai accompanying him; and not knowing who we are—believing us to be a body of his friends—he addresses us before we speak with friendly words: ‘Hasten, heroes! what laggard sloth thus delays you? Others are pillaging and plundering blazing Pergamos; you are only now coming from the tall ships!’ So he spoke, and immediately, for no reassuring replies were given to him, perceived that he had fallen into the midst of the enemy. He stood aghast, and checked his foot and speech, even as one who, as he struggles through a thorny brake, has unawares stepped upon a snake upon the ground, and suddenly flees back from it in alarm as it rises in its wrath and swells out its dark neck; even so did Androgeos commence to retreat, filled with terror at the sight. We rush upon them and surround them with a dense array of weapons, and lay them low on all sides,

ignorant as they are of the ground, and seized with panic. Fortune assists our first enterprise. And now Coræbus, exulting in this success and in his courage, cries out: 'Let us follow, my friends, where Fortune first points out a road to safety, and where she shows herself favourable; let us change our shields, and fit ourselves with the trappings of the Danai. When dealing with an enemy, who would question whether craft or valour should be resorted to? Themselves shall furnish us with arms.' Having thus spoken, he then dons the helmet of Androgeos with its horse-hair plumes and his shield with its fair blazon, and binds to his side an Argive sword. So does Rhipeus, so does Dymas also, and all the other warriors joyfully do the like; each arms himself with the new-won spoils. We go on mingling with the Danai, under no divine protection of our own, and in many battles do we engage in the blinding darkness as we meet our foes, and many of the Danai do we send down to Orcus. Some disperse to the ships, and, flying, seek safety on the shore; some in disgraceful panic again scale the huge horse and hide themselves in the well-known womb.

402. Alas! none may trust the Gods when they will it not. Lo! the virgin daughter of Priam, Cassandra, was being haled from the temple and the shrine of Minerva, her hair dishevelled, vainly raising to heaven her wild eyes, her eyes, for cords confined her tender hands. Coræbus, in frenzied rage, brooked not this sight, but rushed to certain death into the midst of the band. With one accord we all follow him, and in a body charge them, and now first, from the lofty summit of the shrine, we are overwhelmed by the missiles of our friends, and a piteous slaughter ensues, owing to the appearance of our arms, and the error caused by our Grecian crests. Then with a groan of wrath at the rescue of the virgin, the Danai from all sides assemble and attack us: Ajax fiercest of all, and the two sons of Atreus, and all the host of the Dolopes—as at times when a storm bursts, the opposing winds of heaven dash against each other, Zephyrus, and Notus, and Eurys rejoicing in his eastern steeds; the woods groan, and foam-girt Nereus wields his

wild trident and stirs up the seas from their lowest depths. All those also whom in the darkness of the night we have driven in confusion through the gloom, and have pursued all through the city, now appear, and they first recognise our shields and our lying weapons, and note the difference in the sound of our speech. Straightway we are overwhelmed by numbers, and first Corœbus falls by the hand of Peneleus at the altar of the Goddess mighty in battle. Rhipeus, too, falls, who was the very justest man among the Trojans, and the most observant of the right; but the Gods willed otherwise. Hypanis and Dymas perish, being pierced by their own countrymen; nor did thy abundant piety save thee from falling, Pantheus, nor did the fillet of Apollo shield thee. O ashes of Ilium and funeral fires of my kindred, I call ye to witness that in your hour of ruin I shunned neither the weapons of, nor any encounters with, the Danai, and that, had it been fated that I should fall, I had deserved my death by my deeds. Then we are forced asunder, Iphitus and Pelias with me—and of these Iphitus was now somewhat impeded by old age, and Pelias was crippled by a wound inflicted by Ulysses—and we were forthwith attracted by the shouts to the palace of Priam.

438. Here in truth we see a mighty contest, and as if those other conflicts were not going on elsewhere, as if none were being slain in the whole city, we gaze upon a stubborn fight, upon the Danai, rushing against the palace, and upon the threshold beset by the close-locked array of shields that is driven against it. Ladders are fixed against the walls, and at the very doors they struggle up the rungs, and with their left hands covering themselves they oppose their shields to the missiles, while with their right hands they grasp the battlements. Against them the Dardans tear up turrets and the covered roofs of the palace; with such missiles as these when they see the end has come they prepare to defend themselves in the last death-struggle, and they roll down gilded beams, the lofty ornaments of their sires of old; others with drawn swords watched the doors below: these they guard in a dense body. Our courage was renewed to come to the

aid of the king's palace, and to assist these warriors with our aid, and give new strength to the conquered.

453. There was an entrance and secret door, and a means of communication between the various parts of Priam's palace, a postern secluded in the rear, by which, while the kingdom still stood, hapless Andromache was often wont to visit her husband's parents unattended, leading to his grandsire by the hand the boy Astyanax. I make my way to the summit of the highest roof, whence the wretched Trojans were vainly showering missiles. We assailed on all sides with iron tools a tower which stood on the edge of the palace, its lofty roof raised high to heaven, from which we had been wont to see all Troy, and the ships of the Danaï and the Achæan camp; just in the place where the flooring on the palace roof enabled us to make the fastenings totter, we tear it from its lofty site and hurl it down: falling suddenly, it crashes down and falls far and wide over the ranks of the Danaï. But others fill their places; nor meantime do the stones or any kind of missiles cease to fly.

469. Before the vestibule itself, and at the outer threshold, Pyrrhus revels in the fray, glittering with weapons of flashing brass; as when a snake nurtured on poisonous herbs, which the winter's cold till now kept swollen under the earth, now having cast its slough, fresh and shining in youthful beauty, rolls into the light its slippery length with high-raised breast, lifting itself towards the sun, and quivers in its mouth with its three-forked tongue. With him huge Periphas, and his armour-bearer Automedon, the driver of the steeds of Achilles, with him all the youth of Scyros, advance against the palace, and hurl firebrands on the roof. He himself amongst the first seizing a double axe, bursts his way through the unyielding doors, and tears from the hinges the brass-bound doorposts; and now, having cut the panel out, he has opened a hole in the sturdy oak, and has made a huge loophole with a broad mouth. The interior of the palace is disclosed, and the long halls lie exposed to view; the private chambers of Priam and the ancient

kings are disclosed, and they see armed men standing on the outer threshold.

486. But meanwhile the interior of the palace is in confusion with lamentation and miserable disorder, and far within the deep halls re-echo with the wailing of women ; the tumult strikes the golden stars. Then the trembling matrons wander through the vast halls, and embrace and clasp the doorposts and print kisses on them. Pyrrhus presses on with all his father's might ; nor can the barred doors nor the guards themselves sustain his onset ; the door totters beneath his thickly showered blows, and the doorposts, dashed from the hinges, fall. By force of arms a way is made ; the Danaï burst their way in, and having entered slay their foremost foes, and fill the whole place far and wide with warriors. Not so fiercely does the foaming river when, bursting its banks, it pours forth, and with its waters overthrows its mighty barrier, rush a raging mass of water into the fields, and all over the plains sweeps away herds and stalls together. I myself saw at the entrance Neoptolemus maddened with slaughter, and the two sons of Atreus ; I saw Hecuba and her hundred daughters-in-law, and Priam among the altars, polluting with his blood the fires which he himself had consecrated. Those fifty nuptial chambers which gave such fair hope of heirs, those doors, rich with barbaric gold and spoils, were all overthrown ; the Danaï hold them where the fire fails.

506. Perhaps, too, you may ask what was the fate of Priam. When he saw the fall of his captured city, and the entrance of his palace forced, and the foe in the midst of his inner chambers, the old man vainly binds on his shoulders, trembling with the weight of years, the armour he long ago ceased to use, and girds him with his useless sword, and rushes to death into the foes' serried ranks. In the middle of the palace and under the open vault of heaven there stood a great altar, and near it a very ancient laurel, overhanging the altar, and enfolding the Penates with its shade. Here Hecuba and her daughters were sitting in vain around the altars, like doves driven headlong before a black storm, all



huddled together and embracing the images of the Gods. But when she saw even Priam girt with the arms of his youth, 'What madness,' she cries; 'my unhappy spouse, has driven thee to gird thyself with these arms, and whither art thou rushing? The time needs not such aid nor such defences as those of thine; no, they would boot us not even were my own Hector here. Take refuge here, I pray thee; this altar will protect us all, or thou wilt perish with us.' And thus speaking, she brought the aged king to her side, and placed him on the sacred seat.

526. When, lo! Polites, one of Priam's sons, escaping from death at Pyrrhus' hands through the weapons of the foe, comes fleeing down the long corridors, and, sorely wounded, rushes round the empty halls; Pyrrhus hotly pursues him, ready to strike him; now, now he seizes him and presses hard on him with his spear; when at length he came out into full view of his parents, he fell, and poured out his life with much blood. Then Priam, although he is beset by death on all sides, still could not check himself, nor refrain from wrathful speech: 'Now, to thee,' he cries, 'for this foul deed of thine, may the Gods, if there be in heaven any power of goodness which regards such acts, give thee fitting recompense, and bestow on thee thy due reward, who hast caused me to see my son die before me, and hast defiled a father's eyes with the sight of death. Not such, in sooth, was the great Achilles, whose son thou dost falsely boast that thou art, when he had to deal with his foe Priam; but he respected the rights and trust of the suppliant, and gave up for burial the lifeless body of Hector, and gave me safe conduct back to my realm.' Thus spake the aged king, and hurled his powerless spear, which had no force to wound, which was straightway turned by the ringing brass, and hung harmless in the boss of the shield. To whom Pyrrhus: 'Thou shalt tell this, then, and go to announce it to my father, Peleus' son: be sure thou tellest him of my cruel deeds, and of the unworthy son he has in Neoptolemus; now die!' So saying, he dragged him up to the very altar, trembling

and slipping in the streams of his son's blood, and wound his left hand in his hair, and with his right he drew his flashing sword and buried it up to the hilt in his side. Such was the end of Priam's destiny; such an end took him away as was fated, seeing, as he died, his Troy in flames and Pergamus tottering to its fall—him erstwhile a proved ruler over the peoples and territory of Asia. A mighty frame lies on the shore, and a head severed from the shoulders, and a body without a name.

559. Then first did dread horror beset me. I stood aghast; the image of my dear father presented itself to me when I saw the king, his equal in age, breathing out his life from his cruel wound; and I thought of my Creusa left alone, and my house plundered, and the sad plight of my little Iulus. I look back and strive to see how many I still have with me. All my followers, wearied out, have left me, or have leaped down to the ground, or cast their exhausted bodies into the flames.

567. And now I alone was left. I see the daughter of Tyndareus lurking on the threshold of Vesta, and lying hid and silent in the recesses of the shrine; the blazing conflagrations light me as I wander about and cast my eye on all things around me on every side. She, the curse alike of Troy and of her country, dreading the hatred of the Trojans against herself for the overthrow of Pergamus, and the punishment she might expect from the Danaï, and the wrath of the husband she had left, had hidden herself, and was crouching at the altars, a hateful thing. Fierce wrath blazed in my heart; my rage prompts me to avenge my falling native city and exact the penalty of guilt. Shall she, forsooth, scathless see again Sparta and her native Mycenæ? Shall she go as a queen and share the triumph, and see her husband and her home, her parents and her children, attended by a bevy of Ilian dames and by Phrygian attendants? Shall Priam have fallen by the sword? Shall Troy have blazed with fire? Shall the Dardan shore so often have been drenched with blood and this be the end? Not so. For though no glorious name is won by vengeance on a woman, and such a victory deserves no praise, still, I



shall be praised in that I have crushed wickedness, and have inflicted a punishment well deserved; and it will rejoice me to glut my soul with the fire of vengeance, and to appease the ashes of my friends. Such wild words I was uttering, and I was being carried away by the fury of my mind, when my dear mother presented herself to my sight. Never before had she been so clearly visible to my eyes, and she shone forth through the night in unclouded brightness, confessed a goddess in form and stature, such as she is wont to appear to the dwellers in heaven; and she took me by my hand and restrained me, and spoke besides these words from her rosy lips: 'My son, what great trouble of mind is this that stirs up such wild resentment? Why ragest thou so fiercely? What now has become of thy regard for me? Wilt thou not first see where thou hast left thy father Anchises, worn out by age? whether thy wife Creusa still survives, and the boy Ascanius? For round all these wander the Grecian bands on every side, and did not my thought for them prevent it, even now the flames would have consumed them, and the foeman's sword would have drunk their blood. It is not the hated beauty of the Laconian daughter of Tyndareus, nor Paris whom thou blamest, but the stern will of the Gods—of the Gods, I say—which has overthrown this mighty state and laid Troy low from her summit. Behold—for I will remove all the mist which now, drawn before thy gazing eyes, dims thy mortal vision and throws a dank veil of darkness round thee; and fear not thou any bidding of thy mother, nor refuse to obey her injunctions—here where thou seest vast buildings cast into ruin, and stones torn from stones, and the eddying smoke-clouds mixed with dust, Neptune is shaking the walls and the foundations, which he tears up with his mighty trident, and is overthrowing the whole city from its base. Here Juno, our most cruel foe, stands in the van at the Scæan gates, and, clad in armour and full of wrath, summons her friends from the ships. See, now, Tritonian Pallas, shining in her storm-cloud and with the dread Gorgon's head, has taken her seat on the summit of the citadel. The father himself supplies the

Danai with courage and prospers their efforts; he himself stirs up the Gods to oppose the Dardan arms. Hasten to fly, my son, and cease thy struggling. I will be ever by thy side, and will bring thee in safety to thy father's door.' She ceased, and vanished in the thick shades of night; and to me appear terrible forms, and the mighty powers of heaven fighting against Troy. /

624. Then, in truth, I saw all Ilium settling down into the flames, and Troy, Neptune's town, being overthrown from its foundations. Even as when on the hill-top rustics vie with one another in overthrowing an ancient ash which they have hewed with many strokes of their steel axes; ever it threatens to fall, and, quivering, shakes the foliage on its jarred crest, until by degrees, overcome by the blows, it gives its last groan, and, torn from its root, falls on the hillside with a mighty crash. I come down from the roof, and under Heaven's protection make my way through the flames and the enemy: weapons make way for me, and the flames retire before me.

634. And when now I had reached the threshold of my father's mansion and my dear old home, my father, whom first of all I longed to carry off to the high hills, and whom first of all I sought, refuses now that Troy has been utterly vanquished to prolong his life and endure exile. 'Do you,' he says, 'whose blood is untouched by age, and whose strength stands firm in its own vigour, do you bestir yourselves to flee. Had it been the will of the dwellers in heaven that I should prolong my life, they would have preserved for me this home of mine. Enough it is, and more than enough, that we have beheld one destruction, and have survived the capture of our city. Depart, having bidden farewell to my body lying thus, even thus: I myself will find death with mine own hand: some foe will pity me, and seek my spoils: the loss of a tomb is easy to bear. For long now have I stayed the lapse of years, hateful to the Gods, a useless life, from the time when the father of the Gods and the king of men breathed upon me with the wind of his bolt, and scathed me with his fire.'

650. He persisted in talking thus, and remained firm.

We in answer burst into tears, my wife Creusa and the boy Ascanius and the whole household begging my father not to have the heart to involve the whole house in his own destruction, and add his weight to the doom that pressed upon us. He will not hear us, but holds fast to his purpose, and will not leave his home. Again I rush to arms, and in my utter wretchedness I long for death, for what plan or what happy issue was now possible? 'And didst thou think, my father, that I could escape leaving thee behind? Did unnatural words like these fall from a father's lips? If it be the will of the Gods above that nothing shall be left of this great city, and this is thy firm purpose, and it is thy pleasure to involve in the fortunes of doomed Troy thyself and thy children, for the death thou cravest a door is open; anon Pyrrhus will be here, all-stained with streams of Priam's blood, who slays the son before the face of his father—the father at the altars. Was this the reason, my dear mother, that thou dost save me from weapons and flames, that I may see the foe in the centre of my halls, and Ascanius and my father, and with them Creusa, slain in one another's blood? Arms, my men, bring arms: the last day calls the vanquished. Bring me again among the Danaï; let me see again the fight renewed. Never shall we all to-day perish unavenged.'

671. Then I gird on my sword again, and fitting my left hand to my shield, was thrusting it through the straps, and was in act to rush out of the house, when, lo! my wife, embracing my feet on the threshold, clung to me and held out the little Iulus to his father: 'If thou dost go forth to meet thy death, take us too with thee into all the danger; but if after all thou hast seen thou still hast any hope in the arms thou hast donned, guard this house first: to whom is the little Iulus abandoned? to whom thy father? and I who was once called thy wife?' So she cried aloud, and was filling all the house with her lamentations, when suddenly there appears to us a portent wonderful to tell of. For, lo! between the hands and faces of his sorrowing parents, from the top of Iulus's head a light peaked flame was seen to shed light, and harming him

not with its touch, to play among his soft tresses and grow around his temples. Panic-stricken, we trembled with fear, and strove to shake the fire from his hair, and to extinguish the sacred flame with water. But father Anchises joyfully raised his eyes to the stars, and stretched his hands to heaven and prayed: 'Omnipotent Jupiter, if thou art moved by any prayers, regard us now: only this I ask: and if we deserve it by our piety, grant then thy aid, O Father, and confirm this omen.' Scarce had the old man thus spoken, when with a sudden crash it thundered on the left, and a star falling from heaven rushed through the darkness, drawing a trail of brilliant light behind it: we see it gliding over the highest summit of the house, and marking its path as it goes, lose itself in a blaze of light in the woods of Ida: then in its long path the furrow it has left shines forth, and far and wide around the country is full of sulphurous smoke. Then, indeed, my father is unable to resist longer, and rises up, and addresses the Gods in prayer, and worships the sacred star. / 'Now, now,' he says, 'there shall be no more delay; I follow, and whither ye lead me, there I will be. Ye Gods of my country, preserve my house, preserve my grandson: this augury comes from you; Troy is now in your divine keeping. For me, I yield, nor do I now refuse, my son, to go with thee as thy companion.'

705. He ceased speaking, and now the roar of the flames is heard more clearly in the town, and the conflagration rolls its fierce heat closer to us. 'Come, then, dear father, mount on my neck; I will bear thee on my shoulders, nor will such a task weigh me down; however our fortunes shall fall out, one common peril, or one escape from danger, shall be ours. Let the little Iulus keep close at my side, and let my wife follow our steps at a distance. Do you, my servants, give close heed to what I will tell you. As you go forth from the city there is a mound and an ancient temple of lonely Ceres, and hard by is an old cypress-tree, preserved through many years by the veneration of our fathers. To this shrine we will all make our way by different routes. Do thou, my father, take in thy hand our sacred things and

our country's Gods! 'Twere impious for me to touch them, who have come fresh from such a contest and such deeds of blood, till I have cleansed myself in the running stream.'

721. Thus I spoke, and on my broad shoulders and bowed neck I spread a robe, the hide of a tawny lion, and take up my burthen. Little Iulus takes fast hold of my right hand and follows his father with unequal steps; behind follows my wife. We go through the dark parts of the town, and I, who but now was troubled by no weapon hurled against me, nor by any Greeks banded against me in hostile array, am now terrified by every breath, am thrown into wild anxiety by every sound, fearing alike for him who walks by my side, and for him whom I carry.

730. And now I was nearing the gates, and seemed to have got over the whole of my journey, when suddenly the tread of many feet seemed to reach my ears, and my father, looking forward through the darkness, cries: 'Fly, my son! they are upon us.' I see their bright shields and glittering weapons, and then I know not what unfriendly deity confused me in my wild alarm and robbed me of my senses. For while in flight I follow devious routes, and leave the well-known line of road, alas! my wife Creusa was snatched from me, unhappy that I am, by fate; whether she stopped, or lost her way, or sat down weary, I know not, and never again was she restored to my sight, nor did I look back for her whom I had lost, nor did I give any thought to her before we arrived at the mound of ancient Ceres and her sacred shrine. Here, when at length all the others were assembled, she alone was missing, and could not be found by her companions, or by son or husband. Whom of Gods or men did I not hurl reproaches at in my wild grief! what more cruel loss did I see in our ruined city! To the care of my followers I commit Ascanius, and my father Anchises, and the Trojan Penates, and I conceal them in the winding valley. I myself seek the city again, and gird myself with shining arms, resolved to encounter anew all chances, to retrace my steps through

the whole of Troy, and again to expose my life to danger.

752. First, I seek again the walls and the secret portal, by which I had made my way out of the city, and I mark and follow back my footprints through the darkness, and scan them with my eye. Everywhere a feeling of dread disturbs my heart, and even the very stillness affrights me. Thence I make my way back to our house, on the chance that she might have betaken herself thither. The Danaï had rushed in and were in possession of the whole dwelling. Forthwith the devouring fire is rolled up to the highest roof by the wind: the flames rise high above it, and the surging blaze rages up into the air. On I go, and visit again the abode and citadel of Priam. And now in the empty corridors in Juno's sanctuary, chosen guards, Phoenix and dread Ulysses, were keeping watch over the spoil. In this place is piled together Trojan treasure, torn from the fired shrines in all parts of the city, the tables of the Gods, and bowls of solid gold and captured vestments. Boys and trembling matrons stand around in long array. Nay, I even dared to cry aloud in the darkness and filled the streets with my shouts, and called again and again, sadly repeating, but all in vain, the name of Creusa. And as I sought her, and raged without ceasing through all the houses of the city, to me, before my eyes, appeared the unhappy image and the shade of Creusa herself, and her form larger than I had known it. I stood aghast, my hair stood on end, and my voice clave to my throat: then thus she addressed me, and with these words she removed my fears: 'How does it advantage thee, my darling spouse, to give way to this mad grief? All this does not happen save by the will of Heaven; nor does divine law or the great ruler of Olympus above allow that thou shouldst take Creusa hence as thy companion. Exile to a far country is in store for thee, and a vast expanse of sea must thou plough, and then thou wilt reach the land of Hesperia, where the Lydian Tiber flows with gentle stream through the fat fields of men: there happiness and sovereign power and a royal spouse have been won for thee. Shed no more tears for



thy loved Creusa: I shall not see the haughty homes of the Myrmidones or the Dolopians, nor shall I go to be a thrall to Grecian matrons, I who am a daughter of Dardanus and a daughter-in-law of the goddess Venus; but the great mother of the Gods keeps me on these shores. And now, farewell, and keep alive thy love for our own son.' When she had thus spoken, she left me shedding tears and longing to say many things, and vanished into thin air. Thrice then did I endeavour to throw my arms around her neck; thrice did the phantom which in vain I clasped escape my hands, even as the fleeting winds, most like a winged dream.

795. Thus at length, when night is spent, I return to my companions. And here I wonder to find that a great number of new companions has thronged to join me, matrons and men, people collected together to leave their homes, a piteous crowd. From all quarters they have assembled, prepared with courage and means to follow me to whatever land I may wish to lead them to over the sea. And now Lucifer was rising above the crests of Ida's summit and bringing the day, and the Danai beset and held all the gates, nor had we any hope of aid. I yielded to fate, and, taking up my father, sought the mountains.









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Virgil. Aeneis  
Aeneid, II; tr. by Nesbitt.

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